



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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CHANGES PROPOSED FOR ACQUIRED LANDS OIL AND GAS LEASING RULES

New cooperative safeguards over Federal oil and gas leasing would be the result of proposed amendments to the oil and gas leasing regulations, announced today by Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton.

The new regulations would apply specifically to so-called acquired lands in which the surface of the land is no longer in Government ownership but in which the minerals have been reserved.

The purpose of the proposed regulations is to permit the surface owners of acquired lands to suggest safeguards and special leasing conditions which would apply to any mineral leases issued by the Federal Government for subsurface mineral deposits. The regulations specifically apply only to cases where the surface of the land is owned by a State or local government agency or nonprofit educational, charitable, or religious group.

The proposed rules provide that the Department's Bureau of Land Management would notify these owners about any application for a mineral permit or lease and would give them an opportunity to suggest any necessary safeguards to protect the surface use of the lands. This procedure has been informally practiced by the Bureau of Land Management and is now being spelled out in the official regulations.

The proposed rules have been put in writing and included in the official regulations to clarify and standardize existing procedures. Cases of this type have arisen from time to time and just recently cooperative arrangements were made in connection with several mineral leases in the Swan Creek Wildlife Experiment Station near Allegan, Michigan. The new proposed regulations would make these kinds of cooperative programs uniform and standard on all occasions.

Bureau of Land Management Director Edward Woolley noted that there is no legal requirement that makes it necessary to notify these surface owners before issuing a mineral lease. "We believe, however, that for reasons of public policy and the protection of the public interest, this kind of courtesy should apply to non-Federal

agencies who acquire title to the surface of the lands in which the Government reserves the minerals. The regulations now require such notice and consent from other Federal agencies." The proposed amendments would in no way affect the normal leasing protection applying to instances where the Federal Government owns and leases subsurface minerals under lands no longer in Federal ownership.

The complete text of the proposed amendments will be published in the Federal Register. Though this subject does not require a formal waiting period, the Department is providing a 30-day period during which anyone may submit any comments or suggestions. Written comments should be sent to the Director, Bureau of Land Management, U. S. Department of the Interior, Washington 25, D. C.

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